

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

Association of Atlantic Universities Award for Distinguished Teaching, 2026

Application deadline: Friday, May 8, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this award is to encourage excellence in teaching in the universities of the Atlantic region by acknowledging individuals who exemplify such excellence and who contribute more generally to the improvement of the quality of university teaching.

Award Description

This award recognizes excellence in university teaching over a number of years, primarily at the undergraduate level. Up to two awards for Distinguished Teaching will be made annually.

Teaching excellence is exemplified by demonstrating contagious enthusiasm, motivates students to learn deeply, uses pedagogical and technological innovation, encourages independent thinking, self-discovery, and creativity, and promotes critical thinking. Incorporating the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), encouraging, supporting, and developing a strong sense of academic community, while making student learning the highest priority in the classroom or online learning environment are other characteristics of excellent teachers. Teaching excellence also encompasses variety in instructional approaches and opportunities for student participation which instills a desire in students for life-long learning, and inspires them to learn, grow and contribute as principled global citizens.

It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive definition and other characteristics that demonstrate teaching excellence exist beyond these. An individual nominated for this award will be characterized by a proven commitment to enhance student engagement and learning, a reflective and intentional approach to teaching practices, and dedication to teaching improvement.

The following list reflects significant criteria of distinguished teaching, though the Selection Committee is aware that opportunities to demonstrate all these characteristics may vary according to the institutional context. Nominees may also provide other evidence of teaching excellence.

Nominations will be assessed based on evidence of the nominee's demonstrated capacity/ability to:

- Use disciplinary and SoTL research to adapt and develop teaching practice and inform course development;
- Leverage innovative pedagogies and educational technologies in teaching and learning;
- Arouse and motivate student interest and establish the relevance of the subject;
- Provide authentic learning experiences through relevant contexts and opportunities for (experiential and/or community-based) learning;

- Set and communicate clear goals and expectations for learning experiences in courses and individual learning activities;
- Motivate and challenge students to achieve learning outcomes, goals, and aspirations as they develop critical thinking, problem solving and analytical abilities, and capacities to learn independently;
- Establish a class climate / culture where students can learn in a collaborative partnership based on trust, respect, and equity;
- Use approaches to teaching and evaluation of learning that respect diverse student learning needs in line with UDL principles and EDID2;
- Design and implement authentic, effective formative and summative assessment methods that enhance learning and are appropriately aligned with learning outcomes, goals and aspirations and instructional approaches;
- Design strategies to facilitate feedback (e.g., instructor, self, and/or peer) on students' learning that motivates and supports progressive learning and growth, along with application of newly acquired knowledge by students in their lifelong activities;
- Design meaningful learning experiences that encourage active student participation in the learning process through collaboration between students, instructors, and where applicable, community partners;
- Share how the nominee provides equitable, diverse, and inclusive learning opportunities for all students in their classes to succeed regardless of their gender, racial or ethnic background, Indigeneity, sexuality, age, class background, disability, culture, etc.;
- Display and demonstrate excellence in classroom management in various settings (online, hybrid, flex or face-to-face);
- Active participation in curricular development beyond their own courses
- Serve as a role model for excellence in teaching and learning for colleagues, locally and regionally;
- Collect and act on feedback, engage in professional learning activities, and reflect on teaching. For example, by
 - engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning;
 - sharing effective teaching and learning practices with others through workshops, presentations, or publications on teaching and learning; or
 - participating in professional development activities to enhance teaching practice.
 - having positive and lasting impact on student learning beyond the classroom and/or online learning environment.

Given the superb quality of nominees, simply fulfilling the nomination criteria may not, in itself, be sufficient to receive a Distinguished Teaching Award. Therefore, the Committee encourages nominees to demonstrate not only how they meet, but how they surpass, these criteria.

Eligibility

1. Full-time, part-time, sessional and limited term faculty members are eligible for nomination. Those nominated must be members of the teaching faculty, with a typical load for their discipline, level, or term of appointment as determined by their nominating institution.
2. Chairs and department heads who continue to teach a minimum of half a normal teaching load are eligible for nomination.
3. Academic administrators, such as Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Deans and full-time Directors of teaching centres who do not teach this minimum load and/or whose primary role includes educational leadership or promoting teaching excellence are not eligible.
4. Previous recipients of 3M National Teaching Fellowships are ineligible to be nominated for an AAU Distinguished Teaching Award, as the AAU awards are intended to be a progression to this award.
5. No current member of the AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development may be nominated.
6. A nominee may be selected according to a procedure established by the university.
7. A nominee need not have received a previous teaching award.
8. An individual cannot be nominated for both a Distinguished Teaching Award and an Educational Leadership Award in a given year. However, recipients of an award from one category may be nominated for an award in the other category in a succeeding year.

Nomination Information and Procedures

Nominations materials need to be in English for adjudication purposes.

The AAU will reimburse each of its two French-language institutions up to a maximum of \$2,000 per year for the cost of translating a nomination dossier from French to English. Original French-language dossiers should be available upon request from the chair of the Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development which serves as the Selection Committee for the awards.

Application Information

The deadline for applications is set annually, usually during the first week of May.

Nomination dossiers **MUST** be submitted by the AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development representative from the institution. Please consult the list of Committee members, available at <https://www.atlanticuniversities.ca/committees/faculty-development-committee/>

Re-nominations of previously unsuccessful nominees are welcomed and encouraged; however, nominators are reminded that the award criteria may change from year to year.

Award Category

Each university may submit a maximum of two nominations in the Distinguished Teaching Award category. All dossiers will be considered in the category for which they have been nominated, unless in the following exceptional circumstance: When an institution nominates only one person and the Selection Committee believes the nomination is more appropriately suited for another award, the nomination may be switched in consultation with the nominating institution.

Supporting Materials

Each nomination shall be accompanied by material supporting the application in accordance with these Distinguished Teaching Award Guidelines for Nomination. Please submit the dossier to the AAU Secretariat (ckent@atlanticuniversities.ca).

The Committee will accept only those dossiers submitted to the AAU Secretariat by the institution's representative on the Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development. If the institution's representative is not available, the academic administrative head may present the nomination.

Selection Committee

The AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development serves as the Selection Committee for the awards.

Announcement of Award Recipients

Each September, the AAU issues a press release announcing the recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award for that year. Award recipients and their guests will be honoured at a luncheon held during the September meeting of the AAU Presidents' Council. As part of the proceedings at the luncheon, recipients will be asked to give a 10-minute presentation about the importance of effective teaching.

Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase

Recipients of the Distinguished Teaching Award will be invited to participate in a session at the annual Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase.

Nomination Guidelines, 2025

This award recognizes excellence in teaching over a number of years. Please refer to the award criteria and examples on page one.

Dossier Format

The Selection Committee is aware that each of the nominating universities will have its own procedures and criteria relating to internal teaching awards and it wishes to respect these differences. The following guidelines are presented to ensure fairness and consistency in the presentation of nominations for the AAU awards.

Important Information about Dossier Format

- The dossier must be formatted as a PDF file.
- The AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development representative for the institution is the person who should email the PDF file or e-portfolio link to the AAU Secretariat (ckent@atlanticuniversities.ca) by the deadline as listed on the website.
- Nomination dossiers must not exceed 20 numbered pages submitted according to the following guidelines. The following are required but not counted in the 20-page limit:
 - cover page which displays the nominee's name, academic unit, institution, and year of submission;
 - table of contents; and
 - separation pages that clearly identify each category of evidence;
- Dossiers must be presented in 12-point font with all original narrative descriptive content written by the nominee appearing in a consistent standard font such as Times New Roman, Calibri, or Arial. Use standard one-inch page margins all around.
- Dossiers may contain up to two multi-media media artefacts. This could include a brief audio or video clip of student engagement, a peer delivering a testimonial or a recorded letter of support from a community stakeholder. The time limit for these artifacts is two minutes. Each multimedia is considered the equivalent of ½ a page of your dossier, (i.e., reduce your dossier by ½ page for each multi-media component in the dossier).
- Nominees are encouraged to consider dossier layout carefully for ease of reading.

The Selection Committee's decision will be based on material contained within the 20-page dossier, including the multi-media components, and appendices only. The dossier may only include links to the two multi-media components.

The Committee will not accept dossiers which exceed the 20-page limit (excluding required appendices), include more than two multi-media components or which use a font size smaller than 12-point or margins narrower than one inch all around. A dossier which does not conform to these guidelines, or which lacks any of the following component parts will not be considered for an award.

Dossier Contents

The dossier should make a persuasive case for distinguished teaching using evidence from a variety of sources, including the nominee, learners, peers, and exemplary teaching materials. The following categories of evidence and appendices should be presented in the given order:

Part 1: Nomination Letter - A nomination letter summarizing the nominee's major teaching strengths and contributions. If quoting colleagues, students, or community partners, include the name, date, degree program (if applicable), and affiliation.

When the nomination letter is written by someone other than the President or Vice-President Academic (or similar designator), the President or Vice-President Academic should endorse the nomination by appending a brief note or by adding their signature to the nomination letter. No current member of the AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development may be the designated nominator. A note of affirmation should be included in the appendices and does not count toward the 20-page limit for the dossier.

Part 2: Academic Career Achievements - A one or two-page (maximum) summary in list or abbreviated CV format that highlights the nominee's major academic career achievements in teaching, service, and research, with an emphasis on contributions to teaching and learning, such as course development, introducing new instructional strategies or technologies, presenting workshops, or publishing on teaching and learning.

Part 3: Teaching Philosophy - A one-to-two-page (maximum) teaching philosophy statement. An effective philosophy statement provides the context for the nominee's teaching and explains the values, principles, and goals that underpin teaching decisions and actions. It should demonstrate that the nominee reflects on and learns from the teaching experience and literature. The teaching philosophy is the anchor of the dossier and the Committee's first opportunity to hear the nominee's own voice—it should be personal and genuine. The best ones put into words the spirit that animates the teacher, who then comes to life on the page as a result.

Part 4: Evidence of Teaching Excellence - Varied evidence of how the nominee implements their teaching philosophy. Such evidence may include excerpts of course syllabi, examples of their most effective teaching and learning strategies, their development and use of formative teaching evaluation, learning activities developed, or assessment strategies used. Peer and self-assessment are encouraged, including discussion of how peer and self-assessment have been incorporated into teaching. Evidence may also include experiential learning and community engagement activities

and the importance of these activities may also be included. Images used with permission and/or multi-media artefacts may be included but must be incorporated into the textual narrative of the teaching dossier. If quoting colleagues, students, or community partners, include the name, date, degree program (if applicable) and/or affiliation.

Part 5: Holistic Evaluation of Teaching (Self-evaluation, Peer Evaluation, Student Ratings of Instruction) (See also Appendices)

- a) A section that outlines insights and actions arising from self- and peer-evaluation of teaching.
- b) A paragraph that explains the context for student ratings of instruction (SRI) at the institution including the following:
 - the office responsible (e.g., Provost, institutional planning, etc.);
 - the administrative procedures for SRI (who conducts them, how the forms are administered, how the results are reported);
 - the typical course load for a teacher in the department; and
 - if the nominee has used a university-sanctioned alternative to the institution's standard SRI, a description of the alternative instrument and how it is administered, and a rationale for using it.
- c) A table that contains the following information:
 - Two years of courses taught by the nominee during the last five years of teaching responsibilities (allowing for sabbaticals and leaves, and allowing for the advanced preparation of dossiers that require translation from French to English); and
 - the enrollment in each course.

If the institution's standard SRI has been used, the table should also include the following:

- the number of students who responded to the SRI questionnaire in each course;
 - the mean rating received for the global or 'overall' question(s) for each course; and
 - the name and position of the person who summarized the data for the table and how the summary was prepared.
- d) A paragraph that contextualizes or expands upon the data provided and that helps the Selection Committee in its interpretation. For example, what trends or patterns emerge in the data? What information explains irregularities for a particular course? How has the nominee used this information? Whether the institution's standard SRI or a university-sanctioned alternative has been used, the nominee should reflect on the data and explain how they have responded to, applied, or used student feedback to enhance their teaching and student learning.

- e) Alternative methods of collecting student feedback may be included. These may include focus groups, mid-term surveys, etc. Please include details on what questions were asked, what data was collected and how the feedback was used.

Also see Appendices for further student ratings requirements.

Part 7: Letters of Support - Up to six letters of support total with up to three from any one of the following groups of supporters with at least two from a student may be included:

- Students or former students not currently enrolled in any of the nominee's classes or working under their supervision, and
- Colleagues/peers with personal experience of the nominee's teaching.
- Community partners with direct knowledge of the nominee's teaching activities such as experiential learning and/or community engagement.

Important Information about Supporting Letters:

- The Committee will accept letters of support from students or community partners that are up to 18 months old. For submissions translated from another language to English, the Committee will accept letters of support that are up to 24 months old. Note: If original and translated letters are included, the translation will not be included in the 20-page total.
- Current members of the AAU Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development are ineligible to write letters of support or nomination.
- Letters or messages of support may be submitted in the form of a 2-minute audio or video recording. These will count as a one-page letter of support in the dossier
- Letters should provide specific examples illustrating the characteristics attributed to each nominee.
- Letters should include the signature and postal address of the writer. If the letter is in the form of an e-mail message, it should include the full name, e-mail address of the sender, and the date of the e-mail message.
- Mindful of the 20-page limit for the dossier, nominees are strongly discouraged from including multiple letters that repeat the same information.
- Letters with single signatures are valued the same as letters with multiple signatures.

Appendices - The following appendices are required but not included in the 20-page limit for the dossier.

- Complete sets of student comments from two courses listed in the table in Part 5b. If student comments are not collected on the institution's standard SRI, you may include comments collected at the end of the semester by another method. All nominees must explain how and by whom the comments were collected, compiled, and verified.
- A blank copy of the student ratings questionnaire or university-sanctioned alternative.